

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 22 August 1968



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LATE ITEM

Czechoslovakia -
Soviet Union

The loyalist radio in Prague, quoting "military circles of the Soviet occupation army," reported this morning that a new government was to be formed at the Soviet Embassy in Prague between 0400 and 0500 EDT. We have no further word on this.

THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
22 AUGUST 1968

1. Czechoslovakia -
Soviet Union

Soviet military control of Czechoslovakia is virtually unchallenged, and prominent Czechoslovak reformers including Dubcek are in Soviet custody.

The Soviet strategy clearly is to salvage some of the more conservative members of the existing regime as the nucleus for a new, more malleable government. To this end, Pravda this morning charged that Dubcek was the leader of a minority faction which supported counterrevolution. Czechoslovak officials met yesterday with unidentified Soviets in Prague, and another meeting is scheduled for this morning.

As part of this strategy the Soviets have tried to maintain a low profile. They have permitted the important organs of government to function, and all day yesterday they allowed the Czechoslovak media to put out commentary hostile to Moscow. (The flow has since diminished, but several independent radio stations are still functioning.)

Any government the Soviets put together will need their military backing for some time. The Czech populace is almost uniformly behind Dubcek.

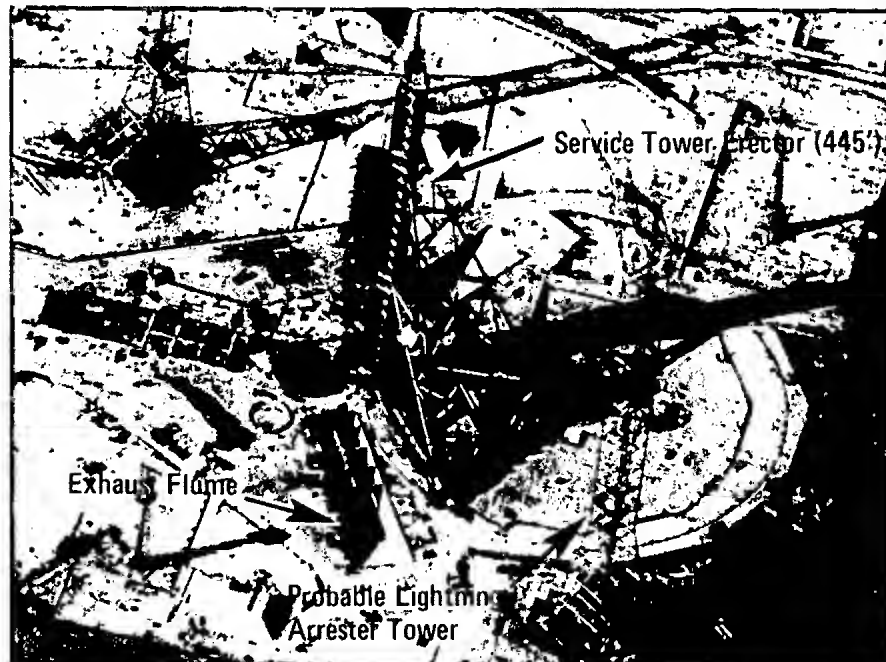
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2. South Vietnam

The Communists resumed the bombardment of Saigon yesterday. They are keeping up the pressure throughout III Corps and initiated several hit-and-run attacks in the delta. There have been scattered engagements elsewhere in South Vietnam, and indications continue to pile up that more attacks are set for the near future. The situation in I Corps is particularly ominous.

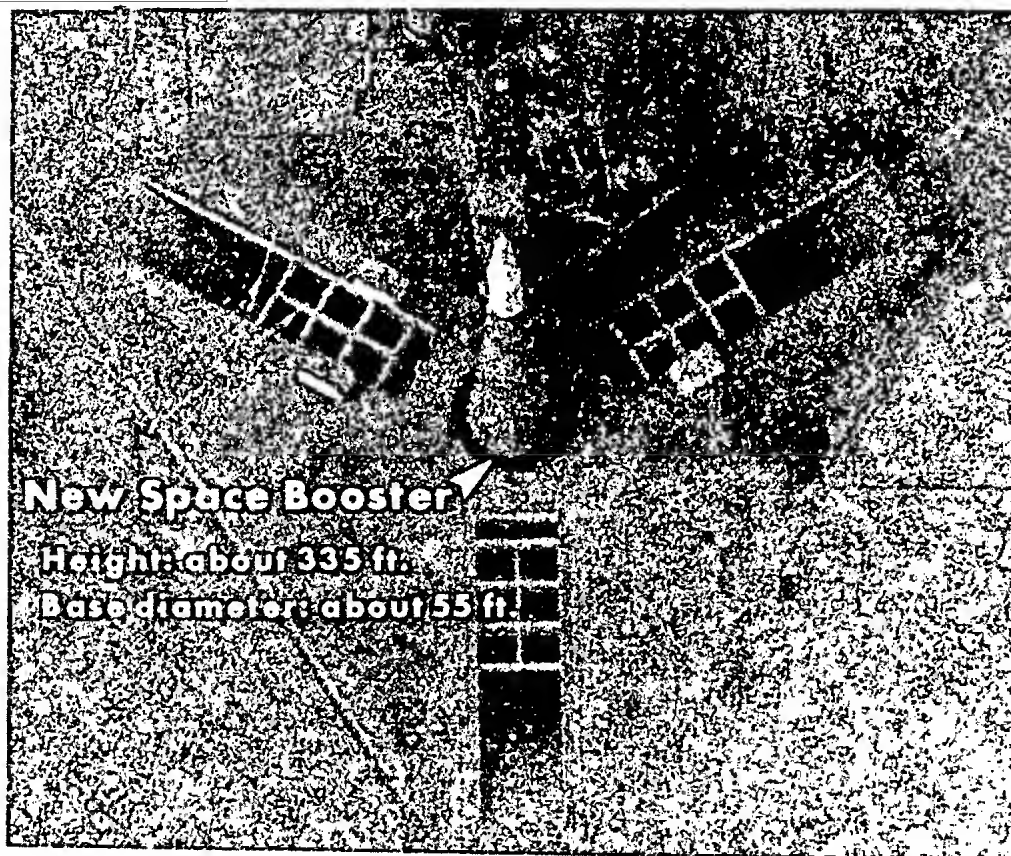
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Huge Soviet Space Booster Erected on Launch Pad at Tyuratam



16 March 1968—Pad Nearing Completion

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91776 8-68 CIA TCS 2605/68

11 August 1968—Missile In Place

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3. Israel -
Arab States

Although we have little specific evidence, we are concerned that there could soon be more Israeli military action against the Arabs.

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4. Soviet Union

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In addition, the newest and biggest Soviet space booster--seen erected on its pad in recent satellite photography--may be due for its first flight test.

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5. India

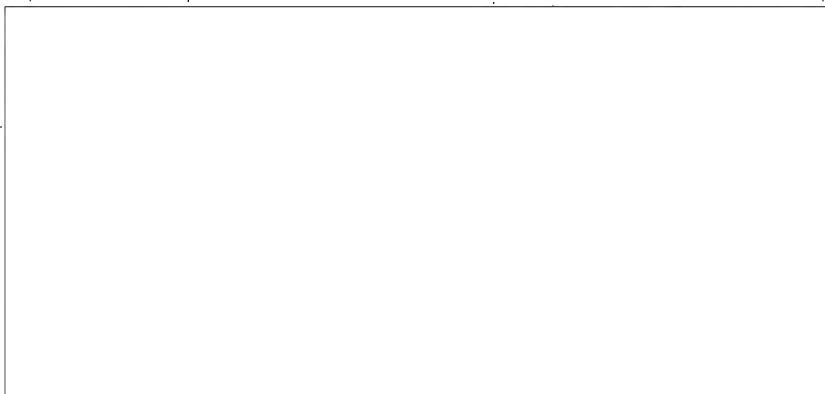
Deputy Prime Minister Desai, long Mrs. Gandhi's chief rival, now says an open split with her is fast approaching. He and the ambitious home minister, Y. B. Chavan, apparently are waiting for an opportune moment for a cabinet showdown with her.

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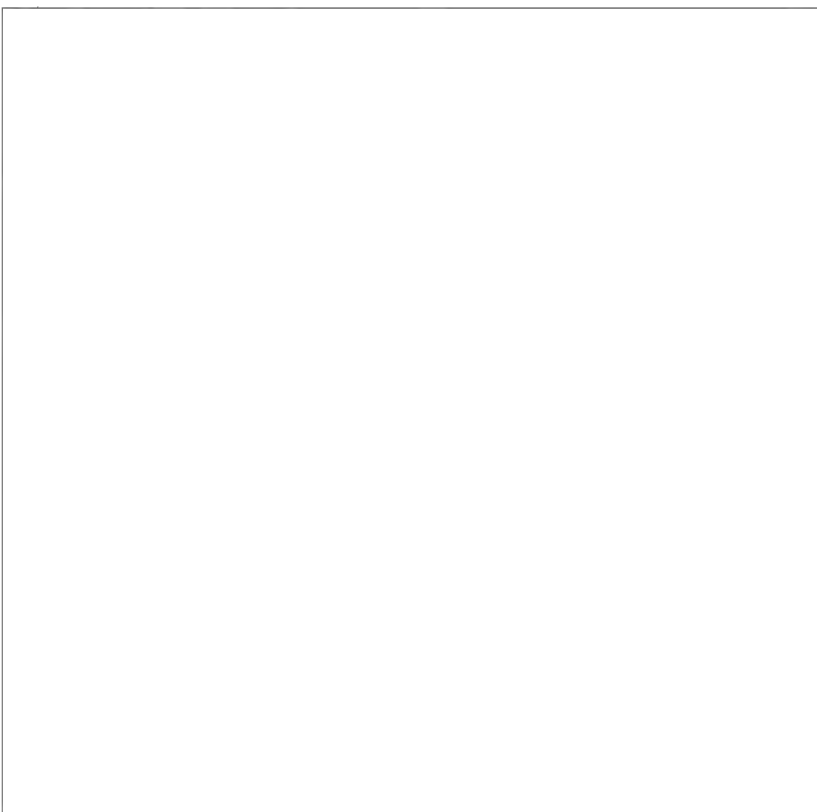
6. Egypt

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7. Mexico

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8. Bolivia

Barrientos apparently has foiled the coup attempt by former army chief of staff Vasquez. Vasquez himself is still at large in the La Paz area, but the security forces have rounded up most of his followers.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

22 August 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Promptly Supports Soviet Invasion: Hanoi has provided strong propaganda support for the Soviet military action in Czechoslovakia. A statement broadcast on the domestic radio service on 21 August is an unequivocal and unusually prompt endorsement, describing the Soviet move as a "noble effort" in response to a request from the "party faithful" in Czechoslovakia. Hanoi says the action is sanctioned by recent agreements among the six Communist countries (USSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany, and Hungary) at Bratislava, and was necessitated by domestically inspired "counterrevolutionary" activities in Czechoslovakia.

Hanoi's prompt reaction is in marked contrast to its propaganda treatment of Soviet-Czech differences before they reached the point of military intervention. Although North Vietnamese authorities have manifested an extreme interest in keeping abreast of developments, there has been little significant public commentary and no previous gesture of support to either side.

The war in Vietnam dictates Hanoi's attitude on any issue, including those involving relations between Communist countries. The North Vietnamese look askance at any development which tends to erode Communist unity and which may deflect Communist attention from support of their war effort. Any sympathy the North Vietnamese may have for Czech aspirations for independence has been muffled by concern that trouble in East Europe might lessen Soviet interest and ability to back up the Communist effort in Vietnam.

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New Polish ICC Member Comments on Hanoi: The new Polish member of the International Control Commission, Ambassador Dobrowlski, paid his courtesy call on Ambassador Bunker on 21 August. He said he had been in

Vietnam about a month and had visited Hanoi. He said the prime minister had impressed him as a "very intelligent and able man" and the North Vietnamese leaders as "practical, just like the Poles."

Dobrowski found in Hanoi a "genuine desire" for peace, but an absolute unwillingness to engage in any discussions in Paris until all bombing stopped. He said the North Vietnamese had stopped the shelling of Saigon and he was puzzled as to why we had failed to recognize this as a sign. The Pole added that Hanoi had had "two successes this year," but even so, was seeking a political settlement in order to end the war.

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Heavy Weather in North Vietnam: Heavy rains and storms since mid-August have combined to cause floods in scattered areas of North Vietnam. Seasonally heavy rains--up to seven inches in three days--were reported falling in several districts of Son La Province and along the Song Ma River in neighboring Thanh Hoa Province. Moreover, tropical storms off the coast of southern North Vietnam in mid-August have moved inland bringing heavy rains and flood conditions to that area.

Pilot reports during the past week have indicated muddy roads and flooding throughout southern North Vietnam. The number of truck sightings was also greatly reduced, probably because of the poor weather. The effects of the weather on logistic activities, however, should be only temporary.

It is still too early to determine the impact of the past weeks of heavy rains on the important tenth-month rice crops, which may be as much as a month behind schedule because of delays in the harvesting of the spring rice crop caused by cold weather. The tenth-month crop is about two-thirds of the average 4.5-million-ton yearly harvest, and is usually harvested about mid-November.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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